

**PART 2: THE NATURE OF REVELATION & THE
REVEALED ‘*DHIKR*’**

Kitāb at-Tawḥeed
(book of monotheism)

By Professor Muḥammad al-Mas’ari

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7. Prophet Muḥammad is the ‘*excellent exemplar*’ without limitation or qualification

In chapter thirty-three of the glorious Qur’ān, Allah the exalted furnishes us with the following indisputable statement. He says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Certainly, you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.¹

As demonstrated unequivocally in the verse, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been described as the ‘*ustwatun ḥasana*’, the most perfect and complete exemplar. This absolute general statement has been made without any limitation or qualification. However, in relation to the leader of all pious people, Ibrāhim the friend of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), Allah has said:

¹ Qur’ān 33: 21

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَاءُ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدَهُ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنْتَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

*Indeed, there is for you a good example in Ibrāhim and those with him when they said to their people: Surely, we are clear of you and of what you serve besides Allah; we declare ourselves to be clear of you and enmity and hatred have appeared between us and you forever until you believe in Allah alone-- but not in what Ibrāhim said to his father: I would certainly ask forgiveness for you, and I do not control for you aught from Allah - our Lord! Upon you do we rely and to you do we turn, and to you is the eventual coming.*²

Allah made him a ‘*uswatun ḥasana*’ only in the matter of allegiance since he was free and disassociated from his people who insisted on disbelief and were outspoken in their hostility towards him as demonstrated by them attempting to murder him (peace be upon him). Though, Allah mentioned an acceptable excuse for him for asking forgiveness for his father. He also praised him for ceasing to ask forgiveness – after the excuse ceased to exist. Allah, whose names are blessed, says:

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَّهَا إِتْيَاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ

*And Ibrāhim asking forgiveness for his father was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him; most surely Ibrāhim was very tender-hearted, forbearing.*³

Yet Allah made an exception from the good example and leadership of Ibrāhim (peace be upon him), which is his asking forgiveness for his father, though he was intending only the good and was excused in doing that. By Allah, Ibrāhim (peace be upon him) did not commit an impermissible deed or a sin. He just did only the less desirable with a good intention and while being dutiful to his father. He asked forgiveness because it was originally permitted and

² *Qur’ān* 60: 4

³ *Qur’ān* 9: 114

allowed to be done. At that time, he was not ordered otherwise but he abandoned it when Allah prohibited it explicitly.

In contradistinction to the matter of Ibrāhim (peace be upon him), it was never mentioned in the Qur'ān that the leader of Prophets and the master of all sent messengers, the nearest one to the Lord of the worlds, Muḥammad ibn Abdallah (peace be upon him) was excluded from being taken as an example to be necessarily guided. This fact when considered with evidences that following his example is Allah's command, necessarily proves that he is the good and infallible example in all his words and deeds with no exceptions whatsoever. The verses mentioned above provide a compelling evidential basis: as outlined by the verse: *'I do not follow anything but that which is revealed to me'* (Surah al-An'ām verse 50, Surah Yunus verse 10 and Surah al-Aḥqāf verse 9); then with the verse *'Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much.'* (Surah al-Aḥ'zāb verse 21) and with the verses: *'Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults and Allah is forgiving, merciful. Say: Obey Allah and the Apostle; but if they turn back, then surely Allah does not love the kāfireen'* (Surah al-I'mrān verses 32/33). Considering these evidences together we can necessarily conclude that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) deeds are an infallible revelation that can be considered an excellent example without any qualification or limitation whatsoever.

Another key principle that can be outlined from what has been presented thus far: whatever the Prophet (peace be upon him) did after revelation began can never be prohibited for the rest of his *Ummah*, unless it has been categorically proven that it relates only to what is specifically legislated for him. Hence his acts can be emulated and followed without fear or hardship. Yet performing mere acts does not make them obligatory or even desirable, except by virtue of clear evidence to that effect. It is inconceivable that the Prophet (peace be upon him) could have performed an undesirable act unless there was a material evidence to show that he performed it only to prove that no one who performs it would be committing something unlawful outright. Though abstaining from performing such a deed would be better. This is partly one of the requirements of being designated as *ustwatun ḥasana*. Likewise, abstinence from a certain act would provide striking proof that this deed is not obligatory on *Ummah*. Besides, there should be evidence to support the prohibition, the

undesirability, or just the permissibility of a deed. It is inconceivable that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would cease to perform a desirable deed, unless he had an evidence showing that he just ceased to perform it to prove that ceasing to perform it is not a questionable matter, so as not to burden his *Ummah*, or for any other reasons that will be discussed in due course. Again, these are some of the requirements of being designated as *ustwatun ḥasana*. It is impossible for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to perform a deed which is prohibited for his *Ummah* or to leave what is obligatory for his *Ummah*. Although it is possible that he may perform something that is of a different category than the former, such as abandoning a desirable deed or performing a disliked deed. This would be a 'sin' for want of a better word between himself and Allah, though it is most definitely not a sin when performed by a member of his *Ummah*. This is the only meaning which is contextually compatible with the previous verses, or with other verses definitely stating that the Prophet's words and deeds are infallible. The meaning is also relevant to other texts that appeared as vague to some people.